HOKŬSAI

A TALK ABOUT HOKŬSAI, THE JAPANESE PAINTER

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HOKŬSAI

I consider it a great honor, a very special honor, to have been asked to say anything here about Hokŭsai. An artist myself, I have been asked by artists to speak of a great artist, and perhaps to manage to make some of his work more easy to persons who, not being professional, have not the dictionary—if I may so say—which explains the meanings of the words. For, as we all know, though we do not always have time to think of it, all forms of art are merely varieties of language and are the signs of meanings—are not the things themselves, and require two factors almost to exist, the person addressed and the person who is addressed. I am very much flattered at being asked to do this; and, at the same time, I know very well that I shall speak to-night to several listeners—and some of them our fellow-members—who know more of the subject by a great deal than I do myself; and to others who, if they do not specially know the little items of biography and fact that belong to this particular painter, understand him perhaps even better than I do. Since the exhibition has been opened several of our fellow artists have given me criticisms of the work here, in ordinary discussion, that I should much like to remember distinctly enough to quote as they were made. But I shall certainly use them as far as the impression has remained in my memory.

I wish that the question of a talk about Hokŭsai, or any artist whose form of art is as far away from ours, did not divide into paths which tend away from a common point. Should I appeal to our fellow members who are artists, I need only draw their attention to some point of technique, and they themselves could gauge, as well as myself, the merit of the person whose handiwork, whose language, this was. For then the question of what might almost be called the meaning of the picture could be dropped; a mere movement of a pencil or of a brush, the peculiar manner in which it is used, is to us a proof of the quality of the person who does it. We know that it either takes very great study or very great natural capacity, or both, to make certain movements of the hand over a canvas and a bit of paper. We know, as Dr. Otis knows, just how complicated is the machinery which is to be set in motion for these feats of sleight of hand, and it is often what seems the least important, or, rather, less showy, which would be our test. But for others than artists there might be, or there might not be, because there are many good artists who have never used a brush or a pencil but whose mind follows the mind of the painter—there might be, I would say, for many others a necessity to explain away some of these rather strange things, to diminish their strangeness by this explanation, and thereby make this foreigner speak, after all, a language not so far removed from our own. And this double current of statement is in a great degree difficult to me. I have thought that I should try to be as little didactic as possible,

and as little controversial, because the appreciation of art is a question of sympathy, and the appeal it makes is a personal one. Especially, I do not want to teach. I should be delighted to suppose that everybody saw things as I do, and I should not wish to increase the opposition which a very healthy mind, sensitive to art, often feels before the very best things that there are. One of the things that we learn is that the merit of a work of art does not depend upon our liking it, but yet that we must have some side in us to which there can be an appeal. We may, for instance, not feel in the mood for some of the greater music; we may not feel in the mood for the music that moves us at times so deeply—all which merely means that there are moments and times for things, and especially that the great things are not the commonplace or the light ones, which at times we need also.

I am thinking, as I speak to you, of my first impressions of this very man, whose merits having been duly recognized by many and diverse artists, are sufficiently established not to need any violent assertion. Mr. Whistler, Mr. Rossetti, Mr. Vedder, most of the French artists, have for the last thirty years admired him; and so many different people having the difficulties of a foreign style to contend with, and no prejudice in favor, are probably very much in the right. I myself am not so great an admirer of Hokŭsai as some men whom I admire myself, but I am sufficiently within reasonable appreciation to think that I am quite safe in my share of admiration. I can quite remember—just forty years ago—seeing

for the first time some of the wood cuts, for which we have one or two drawings at least, here in Mr. Weldon's collection. I saw them in the usual way, coming upon them by chance among Japanese curios in some shop, and though I had seen a little of Japanese work, such as we know in lacquer and porcelain, these were the first drawings. I can very well remember the various impressions and rapid conclusions of the moment. I noticed in the first place the Japanese value of quality analogous to what we see in the surface and material of lacquer or porcelain as connected with its design. With us, of European descent, this feeling for *quality* has diminished very greatly for several centuries. I noticed, for instance, how intimately connected was the surface and texture of the paper with the manner of making the wood cut. The wood cuts of Hokŭsai were not the finest, and there were some by other men more refined in execution; but all these things were remarkable from their technique, extremely superior to anything that we did. We had no level of engraving, and no printing, and certainly no color printing, which could begin to compare with the poorer specimens. As to the finer ones, they seemed impossible at first to understand. There were delicacies of impression that were scarcely distinguishable from the finest execution by hands—I mean the more subtle touch of a human hand. There were broad washes apparently, which looked as if made by a brush; there were entangled lines as clean and distinct as if made by an etcher. The mere mechanical execution of everything was superior to any-

thing that we did, and to find a parallel one would have to go back a couple of centuries to the impressions of Rembrandt's etchings or Albert Dürer's engravings — each of these rare and exceptional work by the rarest and most exceptional of men. And yet it was evident that all the work was more or less cheap and not outside of very simple means. It was necessary, therefore, to accept a level of superior artistic culture among the men who had done these things. The drawing, in its intimate connection with execution in the engraving, was very near to what I had seen of the actual drawings of the old masters ; and, of the wood cuts, Hokŭsai's bore a singular likeness to the work of Albert Dürer. There seemed to be the greatest possible economy of effort, and of what might be called work. Occasionally, on the contrary, where it might please or amuse, there was a lavish expenditure of care about the detail, as if either was a mere matter of choice, and very careful detail or very broad generalization was to be used for its real value and not to obey some outside-imposed rule. Throughout there was an astounding amount of observation. I did not know then, as I have learned since, how much of this was collective and belonged to many of the artists in common. I followed with delight the clearer perception on the part of the draughtsmen of things that I had noticed more imperfectly than they — the growth of plants, the flight of birds, the anatomy of insects, the easy motion of the human body, or of the body of animals ; and the subjects ranged from history and religion to the most trivial details of life and

the habits of the smallest birds or insects. There seemed to be an almost fierce passion for the universal life about us, and our drawings of to-day appeared narrow and stupidly limited in their range by comparison. When some one first translated for me the signature of Hokŭsai, which is upon so many of the drawings in this room, "Hokŭsai, the Old Man Crazy about Painting," I felt that my first instinct was borne out by the story of the master. There seemed to be with him a feverish necessity to give some account, careful or hurried, of observations which he felt were infinite, and the fear also that he might not be able to put down a sufficient number of these notes. This passion, this being carried away by a fierce desire of recording everything, was mingled with a something of detachment from the object, as if to his eye all was equally part of a great pageant; as if a part of himself kept aloof and recorded merely, without being swayed into judgment. To me this was not the most pleasant side, and I still have that one objection; but such a disposition could never belong to any but a strong mind, the mind of an observer reticent as to giving himself away, and yet protecting himself through his very personality. Something like that one sees in Albert Dürer; something like that one sees in the portraits of Velasquez. With this self-imposed necessity of finding a way of representing everything with apparently equal interest, it seemed but natural that special artificial methods must be employed, and, therefore, I was less annoyed than I might have been otherwise by methods and catches,

as it were, which I supposed to be the master's shorthand, not knowing exactly what he had of his own in the way of conventionality, and what he had taken from others—his predecessors. Of course I knew enough to know that every form of art, and every man within that form, fills up the gaps of his want of full observation by some conventionality, as Hokŭsai does here; because of his being a very finite being, with a very short time in comparison with the duration of the world, for instance. Every school that I had seen had accepted or invented some of the conventional, some way of filling up gaps. My studies had been somewhat in the way of classifying these variations, so that one or many more could not surprise me; and, as I told you before, I had learned the first great lesson, in that the fact of my being more or less pleased was not the manner of measuring the intellectual value of a work of the mind.

The record of these impressions of mine, far back—at first sight—is perhaps the best explanation that I can give you of the merits of these drawings now hanging around us. At that time such drawings as Mr. Weldon shows us had not come over. We had merely the prints and a very few drawings of paintings, mostly of mere commercial manufacture.* Fuller acquaintance with the Japanese drawings and paintings themselves was almost impossible out of Japan. We can to-day understand very well the machinery of the conventionalities that, for instance,

*The prints from Hokŭsai's drawings were among the first to meet the Western eyes, and made this powerful impression, difficult to realize by some Japanese, who knew of so many other manners of their own art.

we see here; and it might be worth while for me to state to you how these conventionalities are preserved, and how a great deal of this extraordinary dexterity is secured. This would be a good moment for either Mr. Shugio or Dr. Bigelow, or any other of our members who know, to take my place and give you details. I only know a few points of the training, and those in the case of one only of the schools, but I take it that the differences are merely those that result from the different character of the schools, and not from their ideas of what training should be or of their general aims.

You will notice that the Japanese painter, judged by what we have here or by what we have seen outside, is especially not ashamed of paying the greatest attention to his methods. You will see in some of Hokŭsai's work the most mechanical reproduction of detail, some, I think, with the use of the stencil; and you will see a whole drawing executed—a perfectly incomprehensible marvel—with a finger nail full of ink. I don't know how many of us could do this with one or any brushes. You will see the broadest use of a very big brush with very wet ink, or with very dry ink. You will see the softest kind of wash and the hardest and finest line, so drawn that to our average eye it looks like the work of a graver or the imprint of a wood block. The mastery of the hand-work is—very fairly—a great source of pride, so much so as to be a matter of joke. Paintings have been done with furniture; with stools—with one's clothes slapped into a bucket of ink and brushed against the paper. These jokes are

manners of showing extreme facility of command and even contempt, as it were, of material: the contempt that one has when one has had all due respect for it. Extreme rapidity has been aimed at—claimed as a matter of glory. My Japanese servant once brought me as a present a fan painted by one of the considerable artists of Japan—Kiosai, who died recently—which fan had been painted within so many minutes, and was one of very many that he had painted on the same evening. On that evening he had executed on a fine clean gold screen a peculiar drawing in India ink—I mean by drawing a sort of painting—as a manner of bravado. He had taken off his outside silk coat—the short jacket of ceremony—and throwing it into a bucket of prepared India ink he had used the body and the suddenly-loosened sleeves as one would a brush. In a little while I will tell you an anecdote of Hokŭsai in the same direction.

But I wish to describe the carefulness of training which allows the artist to do the very beautiful work that we know, looking at it as merely work, or to perform the feats of bravado that I have mentioned.

In the school of the Kanos—a family of painters still existing, I think, and which has had four centuries of continued existence, Kano succeeding Kano—something like the following is the method of instruction: There were a small number of rooms occupied by the master and the students, the master seldom entering, if at all, the room where the students worked. One of these, a long corridor next to that of the master, was devoted to pupils of medium grade, among

whose duties was that of attending to the wants of the master. In the largest room, what would be properly the atelier, the studio, the students of the highest grade had the best seats nearest the windows, and the new pupils had their places in the dark parts of the room. The floors, as you know, are covered by mats, always of a regular size: that is to say, six feet by three. The space of two of these was given to each pupil; there he kept his desk, his box of colors, and whatever else he needed. Of course, as you understand, he lay or sat on the mat to paint or draw. Most requirements of the school were unwritten, orally transmitted from generation to generation like certain of the secrets of touch and of handling; for everything in Japan has secrets which are guarded with superstitious care and importance. Certain written rules were as follows: 1st. That the students should diligently apply themselves to study by day and night. 2d. That they should take the utmost precaution against fire. 3d. That, except to discharge business for the master, they should not go out of the house without permission; and that in the event of anyone's being obliged to pass a night away from school a certificate must be brought from the proprietor of the house where he had staid. 4th. That strict simplicity should be observed on all festive occasions, as, for example, the admission of a new student for the " grant of one character," of which I shall speak later. 5th. That except on holidays or for inevitable business, visits must not be paid to houses in the same compound. 6th. That students should neither feast nor quarrel among themselves.

7th. That they should be at their desk by seven in the morning, and not lie down before ten at night. 8th. That before retiring to rest each student should take his water bowl—for remember, this is all water color work—to the bamboo corridor outside. Lastly, the students of the Kano were strictly forbidden to associate with artists of the Chinese school, nor were they allowed to study the paintings of the Ukioye, an opposing and more realistic school, of which Hokŭsai is a prominent example.

The course of instruction was quite as rigid—sixty pictures by a famous artist of the Kanos, reproduced in five volumes and duplicated, were kept in the school library for models. The student first made a careful copy of one of these pictures; from this copy he made several others, until knowing thoroughly every detail and every stroke of that picture, he was able to submit a final copy to the master's judgment. Each one of the sixty pictures was singly studied in the same way, and this was supposed to occupy the first year and a half of apprenticeship. The master's pictures of flowers and birds occupied six months more with the same detailed study from sunrise to sunset. Then the pupil began to study promiscuously works of other masters of the school, and he was allowed to use color. After three years a proficient student was able to assist in the mechanical part of the master's picture, filling in the flat color of the dresses, etc. Members of the Kano family, when seven or eight years old, were taught to paint simple forms, such as egg-plants and melons. They learned *shuan*, which

means strength of the muscles of the arm. As they gradually advanced they were taught to draw after designs—thirty-six in all—made by Yosen for beginners. Their chief object was to develop skill in the use of the brush. After the eighth year the pupil had probably made himself worthy of the grant of one character of his master's name. After the pupil had received the name of the house, he had one more degree to get. Each Kano had two names besides Kano. For example, Hogai, who died a few years ago, and whom I met, was a pupil under Shoshenin Yoshinobu, and was called Shokai when he received his first degree, and afterwards Yoshimichi. In the first name the character "Sho" is the first letter of the name of his master's house; in the second name "Yoshi" is the first character of his master's personal name Yoshinobu.

As you see, this was not only a compliment, but a form of intellectual adoption, and a manner of asserting or claiming, or, as is said out West, "allowing" that one belonged to a certain school.

The course of study in a Kano school usually took over ten years, and the average age of graduates was thirty. This extraordinary pursuit of mechanical excellence, this learning to render each classified fact in nature by a certain touch, a certain set of lines, a certain meeting of lines at certain angles—the Kano school, for instance, teaches a different touch for religious and secular painting—all this has ended in so drilling the pupil as to make him find original departure difficult. The school system has been carried out with such extravagant fidelity

that weaker men have been more or less crushed out. But they have been taught to preserve a perfectly respectable surface manner, and to keep within the limits of good taste. For originality is only valuable when attended by a force of mind that uses it solely as a means. The small mind is tempted to suppose that it is an end. And so in much Japanese work one misses the sensation of freshness and freedom which only the better men give.

I do not speak of this with any regret, for it will always be a question in teaching whether it be not well that the weaker minds should gain the support of a rule, and lose as much as possible their chance of developing what is not worth saving. But, however true or false these views of mine may be, this account of actual training is sufficient to explain the extreme persistency of certain conventionalities. I might have added that brushes of certain shapes, ink of certain colors, the use of certain paints: all these were part of the inheritance of the school.

That name which Hokŭsai has signed so often, and which is written on his tomb, "The Old Man Mad about Painting," is also explained by the habit, as you see, of taking the *nom de plume*, or rather, in this we may say, *nom de pinceau*. I myself have had in Japan the offer of a name.

The artist Hokŭsai, in these pictures about us, signs at first "Sori." He seems at that moment to have been working in the workshop of Sori; but before that, in a signature of which I do not see a sample here, he called himself "Shunro," from the name of Shunsho, with whom he appears first to have

studied. He was then already a young man, and not such a child as I have described, going to the school of a master at a possible age of eight or ten. It is at eighteen apparently that Hokŭsai enters the studio of Shunsho ; "plays in the gate of the master," as the Japanese wording is. He seems to have done some work, and learned engraving on wood before that; but all this is fairly obscure. Only it might seem that his father had some artistic or intellectual ambition, and that his family name—that is to say, of his father's family—was Kawamura. That is the name chosen by his daughter for the tomb erected to him some time after his death.

Shunsho is, therefore, his first master, and he was trained—as properly belonged to his class of life and apparent habits—in the school sometimes called the Vulgar School of Painting, "the Painters of the Floating World :" that is to say, the ordinary world that moves all about us. This school is known to us outsiders more than any other Japanese school of art, because its painters took to wood engraving and reproductions by color impressions, of which many repetitions have reached us. They became more and more interesting and vigorous, while the older schools narrowed the number of their personalities at the end of the last century and the beginning of this.

Shunsho was one of the important persons of this school, which so many of you know by wood cuts, when Hokŭsai entered his studio, about the year 1775. This training and these tendencies, while giving to Hokŭsai perhaps a greater chance to break away from rules and to indulge in his passion

for universal representation, explain also a very frequent want of refinement, as compared with some of the other and older artists, and also perhaps—though it must have been more or less in his nature—a certain willingness to change style and manner according to either the fashion of the day or his own momentary fancies.

The time of Hokŭsai is the end of an epoch in Japanese history known to us all in general as the time of national isolation. This singular experiment was closed, almost immediately after his death, by our coming to Japan and insisting upon the opening of the country for commerce and outside circumstances. But the curious policy of isolation and of immobility inflicted upon an exceedingly impressionable race, who were in reality extremely fond of every novelty, ended by withdrawing the higher life and aspirations of the country from the ordinary knowledge of every day. Whether thinkers, students, artists and literary men of the higher type, were or were not in sympathy with the despotic government which held Japan under a systematic control, their retirement allowed them no such contact with the world in general that an artist like Hokŭsai could get the benefit of appreciation, and I might say of education, from the higher and more intellectual classes. It was every one's fault ; it was not especially Hokŭsai's. Besides that, the greater side of this system of government, the exaggeration of feudal pride and duty and military obedience, placed also a wall between the ordinary people, to which Hokŭsai belonged,

and the governing classes, through whose patronage he might have obtained encouragement and fairer living, and the sort of training that comes of intercourse with superiors. All the more, perhaps, has he been near the people and built into his enormous work—for his drawings have been counted up to 30,000—the stories, the traditions, the legends, the habits, the jokes and manners of the average people.

Another thing that affected him, as it affected other artists, was the habit of representing the theatre ; and one sees, as you must all have seen, a certain theatrical exaggeration in gesture and character rendering which gives a doubtful reality : in many cases the drama is true, but it is true through a stage rendering. There is, therefore, with him something like caricature, and one feels it very much in the rendering of such things as are laughable, and in those subjects in which the special character of the painter and his ironical observation of life has made the turn towards caricature a true one, representing life in a rapid way.

After all, you see this is only another way of representing truth, or rather of using truth as a manner of giving one's impressions.

Hokŭsai's extreme interest in everything that he saw with the external eye, or the eye of imagination, has made him pass from one to another of many styles which he had studied in others or developed for himself. Yet, through almost everything, there is a special personal character which one recognizes as Hokŭsai's. The story of his artistic life represents his variations.

After a time he leaves the studio and the training of Shunsho; it is said after some particular quarrel fastened upon him by another more authorized pupil, who said that Hokŭsai degraded the methods of the master. It appears that he had painted some sort of a sign for a print-seller, who, estimating it very highly, had it well placed in his shop, when a jealous and older student, upon seeing it, tore it up to save, as he said, the honor of the studio of Shunsho.

But it is more certain that he was dismissed by his master, Shunsho, because of his secretly studying also under a master of the *Kano* school; naturally, a grievous offence. This is the beginning of Hokŭsai's liberty, which will come up under whatever system he is willing to impose upon himself.

He is next represented here under the name of "Sori," which begins with the date of 1798. He had been fascinated by the charm of the style of Tawaraya Sori's painting, and this name records the influence. I do not know of his having entered Sori's studio—"Tai-sei-ken," "the House facing the Blue." Then on New Year's day of 1799 he signs "Sori, who has changed his name to Hokŭsai." He has abandoned this name of Sori to his pupil Soji, and now in 1800 he calls himself Hokŭsai again.

This is the tradition of what had happened. He had been reduced to the most abject poverty. He had even taken to peddling cheap food, and later cheap almanacs. "Once, as he made his way through the busy quarters of Yedo, he came across his former teacher, Shunsho, accompanied by his wife. He felt abashed and turned away."

"Just then a man came to him and asked him to paint a flag for the Boys' Festival"—a great day in Japan—the fifth of May. "The man was pleased, and rewarded the artist with two Ryos."

Looking upon this as a turn of luck, "he cast away the mean thoughts of a mean life, and stood erect among the wants of poverty."

"He swore to the God Myoken," the god of the North Star, patron of intellectual occupations, "to make painting his profession through life." Hence his new name, Hokŭsai, which has prevailed over all the others, even over that of "Manji," the name of the mystic character 卍, which we call to-day the "Swastika," emblematic enough, since, as my Japanese servant remarks, it opens its arms to all sides.

Hokŭsai may mean Northern Studio, or Studio of the North, or House of the North. And then immediately afterwards, in the same year of the beginning of our century, 1800, he signs "Hokŭsai, the Man Crazy about Painting," a definition to which he will return very frequently, as you can see by the drawings about you.

It would take a long time to describe the evolutions of Hokŭsai, and what seem to be his frequent returns to certain earlier methods, or methods of some of the men of his youth. He develops certain great points for himself; among others, such grandeur of line as you can see in the large outline study of a woman passing her hand around her neck to arrange the set of her garments.* In this draw-

* Note the indication of the style of hair, this being a young girl's method of dressing the hair high — called Shimada.

ing is shown a side of Hokŭsai so emphatically different from the hard and set line which he affects apparently as willingly, that it is worth dwelling upon for a moment. In another, the large representation in the middle of the room of a Chinese heroine, something of the same charm of roundness and flexibility will be noticed. In fact, notwithstanding the frequent smallness and niggardliness of some of Hokŭsai's representation of women at certain dates, he is as frequently, in any subject where he thinks it fit or proper, impressed by the roundness, the grace, the flexibility of the feminine form. We have few such examples in the room, but a great many are known to many of us, and many are reproduced in his wood cuts. It was only a few days ago that, looking over many of them, I noticed a curious analogy to the Greek habit of rendering the female form in the fold of the neck (the "collar of Venus," as it is called), the set of the shoulders and the proportion of the bosom, which, in some way or other, allowed me to glance at the Venus of Milo without feeling any want of connection. It is this surprising range that establishes, even for a person as unsympathetic as I am to Hokŭsai, the essential importance of the man and the probability of his name becoming better known throughout the world than it has ever been in Japan. Any subtle and scholarly analysis of his work, and its ups and downs, would be impossible in such a talk as mine. I think that I shall merely mention some little facts of his life—some surprising, some amusing—and we can see by them how well these accidental anecdotes give the many-

sided mind of the painter as well as his character of looking at things from a place not *within* them.

It seems that almost through all his life he suffered from poverty, sometimes in a grievous way, and that even at times he "lay low," as the boys have it, so that he did not put out his name, but was known as "the gentleman who lives in such and such a place." His long life must have helped at times to make him forgotten before he branched out anew into some drawings or paintings that established him again. One of the famous stories about him (another record of the very Japanese eccentricities related of artists, done as bravado or defyings of the public) is a proof that some of his merits were not sufficiently recognized. I make it out to have occurred in 1817, while he was in the city of Nagoya, which is at a considerable distance from his own Yedo. He had pupils there. He had been asked to make drawings, and while his pupils made much of the extraordinary variety and truthfulness of his representations of all things in his little drawings published in books, the opponents of the vulgar school twitted them because Hokŭsai could only draw in a small way. To this, he answered "that if the talent of a painter had anything to do with great size and with the grand brushwork necessary to great size, he could astonish them all." So that with the help of his pupils and friends he undertook to execute before the public an enormous painting. We have an account of it, with drawings, by an eye-witness.

In the middle of the eastern court of one of the temples, which was screened off, a paper, made on purpose by a maker of the thick paper for the rain-cloaks that are used in Japan, was stretched upon the ground on a bed of rice husks of considerable depth. From place to place timbers held it down to prevent its being blown away. For this piece of paper on which he was to paint represented a surface of 120 mats, the mat being, as you know, six feet long by three wide. An enormous scaffolding was raised against the council building, and cords and pulleys were fixed so as to lift this big drawing when it should have been done, or at any moment when part of it would be better out of the way. India ink had been prepared in buckets. All this occupied the morning, and in the afternoon, before an enormous crowd of all classes, Hokŭsai and his pupils, in ceremonial dress (but with bared arms), began their work, the pupils taking the ink out of the buckets and carrying it about after the painter in a bronze basin. The subject was to be the head and shoulders of Dharuma, the Buddhist saint, of whom we have in the room a great many representations. You will remember him seated gravely, his head covered with his cloak, and rolled up in a sort of ball, for, traditionally absorbed in meditation, he never moved, and lost the use of his limbs from his immobility. This, of course, is the commonplace and jocose side of Dharuma.

With a brush made of a bundle of rice straw, Hokŭsai drew the nose and then the right eye and then the left eye of the Dharuma; then he took

many steps, and he drew the mouth and the ear, and then, running away, began to trace the outline of the head, and then drew the beard and the hair, using to shade them a bunch of buckwheat shells, which he dipped into a thin India ink. Then on an enormous table another variety of brush was brought to him, already filled with ink; it was made of many bags of rice, fastened together, and to this so-called brush was fastened a cord. Hokŭsai indicated the place where the mass should be laid down, and then, taking the rope upon his shoulder, dragged the brush with slow and broken steps, and thus made the great sweeping lines of the dress of Dharuma. The pupils then took the color or colors out of buckets with brooms and threw it upon the dress, sponging up the lights with cloths. By night the great Dharuma had been done, and with pulleys the great picture was lifted. But it was only by the next morning that the entire picture could be shown to the public, because of the scaffolding having been somewhat too short.

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It is said by his biographer that Hokŭsai was a good poet in the popular methods. It is related that he was a member of a club or society of poets, and that he usually acted as chairman or president. Among the servants he was unknown as a painter, which reminds us of the value and advantage of the *nom de guerre*, or the *nom de plume*, assumed by a professional man, in this, that his name does not follow him everywhere. One evening Hokŭsai painted upon a lantern—the paper hand-lantern of

Japan, which usually has some drawing or some lettering upon it — certain fernstalks so marvellously rendered that the servant who had brought the lantern exclaimed, "Really, sir, what a talent you would have for drawing."

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Hokŭsai has left us occasionally among his innumerable drawings, or rather books of drawings, certain statements and comments that are worth quoting as again giving his character; and I take an extract from one of these albums which consists of pictures of certain illustrious Chinese heroes, known as the heroes of the Suikoden. "It seems to me that in all Japanese and Chinese representations of war I miss force and movement, which are the essential characters in such cases. Saddened by this want, I have burned myself in trying to find a remedy and to bring to the task what has seemed to me to be wanting. Doubtless, in my drawings there are faults and many excesses, but all the same I am pleased to see that my pupils are willing to use them as models."

A drawing for one of these books of Chinese story — perhaps for the very Suikoden — is there upon the wall; apparently, the drawing carefully decided upon for the engraver. I believe that I recognize it, having owned the engraving, and that the heroine who struggles with the prisoner is the famous Amazon Ichijo Sei, and that it is her husband O-e who is helping her. Of course, it is emphatically a composition, an adornment as well as a picture of struggle, but Hokŭsai has also given

a look of portraiture to each head. And I think that in the case of the woman he has realized, if not invented, a very noble type of strength, and at the same time of femininity.

However admirable many of his drawings of battles and struggle may be, and however astounding they are to the professional man in their endless variety and boldness, there are moments when I become very tired of them. At other moments I see nothing but what he must have wished to see himself. I can fancy quite well that Mr. Fenollosa, our famous expert, must be quite right when he explains to me that Hokŭsai, owing to his social position and general tendencies, and the fate of the moment, to which I have before alluded, was shut out from the sight of many works of art that might have helped him and given him a standard of high merit in battle scenes. Certainly in a great deal of the older work there is a wonderful reality that looks as if it were familiar to the actual sight of the artist, who himself may have been a sworded man belonging to the warrior class. With this reality goes a freedom and a poetic sense that has occasionally reminded me, especially in the drawings of horsemen, of the fancy and vigor of Delacroix—another proof, if necessary, of the observation and the imaginative power of the great French painter.

However that may be, it will always be a question whether a man as personal as Hokŭsai would not still have been strange and different. Even if he had seen everything else in painting, his habits

and the fierce necessity of every day work for a bare living would make a large number of the factors of what he achieved. His case is an interesting one because of its being so frequent. The daily food to be obtained in a hurry—with the necessity of pleasing a public, and at the same time with the intellectual necessity of suiting oneself and being oneself, no matter how much and how continuously one varies according to the fashion which brings one bread. If we have this well before our mind, the astounding importance of Hokŭsai—a sort of art-laborer—is enhanced, and we can appreciate the fluctuations and weaknesses of which he has contrived to make strength and a steady course.

That he knew a good deal of what was outside, his occasional imitation of certain European tendencies, the use of what we call perspective, and some other points, might prove, even if he had not written in a little book published under another name (a book on Color), the following about the Dutch processes for painting in oil in the European way. What he says gives in a few words the essential differences between Europe and Japan, both of which differences he admits as equally legitimate.

"In the Japanese painting," he says, "we try to give the form and the color without the relief or modeling, but in the European process, relief is sought for and a manner of deceptive imitation."*

That is the essential difference, so much so as to justify quite well the statement of the Japanese looking at the exhibition, say of the Academy of

* The word form is perhaps mistranslated, but as near as I can get.

Design, or any other: "Do they think that they can take me in? I can see that these things are not real."

If you will notice, the Japanese gives up that question of making you believe that you could touch the thing; he gives a statement, an intellectual statement of certain sides of what we see to which he sacrifices other points.

But the famous quotation at the beginning of the collection of the hundred views of Fuji-Yama should always be repeated whenever we quote from Hokŭsai: "From the time that I was six years old I had the mania of drawing the form of objects. As I came to be fifty I had published an infinity of designs; but all that I have produced before the age of seventy is not worth being counted. It is at the age of seventy-three that I have somewhat begun to understand the structure of true nature, of animals and grasses, and trees and birds, and fishes and insects; consequently at eighty years of age I shall have made still more progress; at ninety I hope to have penetrated into the mystery of things; [then comes the inevitable irony of Hokŭsai] at one hundred years of age I should have reached decidedly a marvellous degree, and when I shall be one hundred and ten, all that I do, every point and every line, shall be instinct with life—and I ask all those who shall live as long as I do to see if I have not kept my word.

"Written at the age of seventy-five by me who was formerly Hokŭsai, and who is now Gwakio Rojin, the Old Man Crazy about Drawing."

Ten years later he still lived and painted, and we have one of the last of his drawings here on the wall, painted at eighty-eight years of age.

He died in a house of Asakusa, a district of Tokio, then called Yedo, which was the ninety-third place in which he had lived during the course of his vagabond and struggling existence.

It must be then that he wrote to his friend Takagi this last ironical letter.

"The king Em-Ma, the king of the under world, is very ill and about to retire from business. He has had himself built on that account a pretty little country house, and he asks now that I should go and paint something for him. I am, therefore, forced to go, and when I go I shall take my drawings with me. I intend to hire rooms at the corner of the street of the under world, where I shall be glad to receive you whenever you shall have occasion to pass there.

"Hokŭsai."

His dying words have been kept—one phrase again in the usual strain: "If Heaven gave me only ten years more—if Heaven gave me only five years more of life—I might become a really great artist." "With these words he passed away."

"The funeral was carried out with money contributed by his pupils and friends. His coffin was of ordinary materials, but among the train of one hundred persons that followed it were gentlemen attended by armed retainers. This was greatly envied by the neighbors, for there was no record in

the history of those low tenement houses that so imposing a funeral had ever gone out from the quarter."

He died probably on the 18th of April (others say the 10th of May), 1848, just a little before Japan was opened to the world. The tomb that I have spoken of has on one side the name that we know so well, "The Tomb of Manji." 卍 "The Old Man Crazy about Painting," and below the family name, Kawamura. The other side of the monument bears a ceremonial inscription, as usual, more or less conventional or full of meaning, as we wish to see it. It is the record of the passage out of this world, and brings in again the Japanese habit of another name after death. "Nanso In" he is called by his new name after death, "the singularly illustrious, Hokŭsai, the sincere believer."

On a third side of the four-square pillar is given the verse or sentiment—"Words of Departure," which, according to a Japanese habit, he composed just before his death. I have found them extremely difficult to translate, nor have I found agreement as to their meaning. "Sorrow and the soul dissolved. Pleasure (it will be) to roam the wide fields of Summer."

The biographer that I have chiefly consulted seems doubtful as to whether Hokŭsai was buried there. The priest of the temple told him that this tomb was built by Kase Sakujiro, Hokŭsai's son's son, after his death; that the body was not there, but was under his father's tomb; and there are still more doubts as to whether he be not buried somewhere else.

The question of a monument to a man of the kind, even if great and famous—a great poet, a great painter, a great scientist—is of very little consequence. We can all remember how absurd the honors—great as they were—that were paid to Michael Angelo by his solemn funeral and his tomb, meant to be imposing. How much better the old man's request for a simple burial, and on his tomb his unfinished statue of Christ's entombment, typical of his faith, and of the fact that no one in the intellectual life can hope to close what he has lived in.

The whole question is another explanation of the position of a man like Hokŭsai : the question of his being more or less the representative of his nation, of its art, or on the contrary, of his being antagonistic to most of the higher traditions of the art of Japan. The man who has carried out with more or less success in his own life such a course of intellectual appreciation of the world does not depend at all upon the approval or blame of his people or his nation. They may even pass away, they and their ideas and their civilization—and his *own civilization* embodied in himself remains, as it has been with so many poets, artists and thinkers of the past. For the man who lives with the support of others—statesmen, politicians—the monument is a fit thing : his existence, his value is his connection with other people.

There is a charming story, Japanese or Chinese as you may wish, of which I have been reminded lately by a charming book by one of our guests, Mr.

Takayanagi—charming also through the style of Mr. Riordan. It is a story of a famous Chinese painter who lived in Japan far back—ever so far back—and who painted there sublime religious pictures. But getting old, he went home to China to die, and at the end he betook himself to landscape painting. Every one knew that he was so engaged, and that he was painting a great painting—some screen, perhaps—a subject representing mountain scenery, such a retreat as a man might wish to end in when he had given up the world. This was known to his pupils, but no one was allowed to see it, until at length, by some sort of command, he offered to show it to the Emperor and the court. Of course it was criticised ; fault was found with the technique; and the reality; and the composition; and the feeling; and whatever else does not suit other people. The old painter listened without answering. He bowed in acknowledgment to the people present, and then, to quote the text, "As he had created this work of art for his final abode," he stepped into the picture and disappeared within the images that he had painted. And the painting also faded from before the spectators. The moral of this story, good for all of us artists and all of us critics, is natural enough—that the art of the painter is his final abode. If it be really his—he is safe within it—safe from praise as he is safe from blame.